



The Honorable Elaine Chao
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Growing Rural Economy and Agriculture through Transportation & Technology Enhancement or Replacement in North Carolina Project (GREATTER-NC) BUILD Grant Application

Dear Secretary Chao:

Please accept this letter of support for the 2018 BUILD Capital Grant Application submitted by the North Carolina Department of Transportation for the GREATTER-NC Project, a visionary rural access and mobility project.

The GREATTER-NC Project directly addresses the dual challenge of improving physical and digital connectivity in North Carolina's rural communities. The Project will reconstruct approximately seventy (70) bridges located in 17 of the most rural and economically depressed counties across the state, potentially adding broadband capability to a number of the structures as they are rebuilt. Nearly twenty (20) of these bridges include weight restrictions that result in large or heavy vehicles having to detour to avoid crossing them or to only partially load the truck and incur greater cost. Removing the weight restrictions by replacing these bridges will reduce transportation costs for agricultural and other commercial shippers. The increased access will help bring greater economic competitiveness to these rural areas. The broadband capability will benefit other important infrastructure projects being made independently in the state, namely the future Carolina Connector Intermodal Terminal which will be located in an area without current broadband capability. The addition of broadband will allow this terminal to improve coordination with shippers and other transportation assets to more effectively serve as a freight hub.

While the project addresses multiple evaluation criteria for the BUILD program, improving the economic competitiveness of North Carolina's rural communities lies at the heart of this project. According to the NC Broadband Infrastructure Office, 95 percent of state residents lacking broadband access are in rural areas. Many internet applications require higher speed internet capability with the result that rural households and businesses reliant on dial-up or lower speed services are effectively closed out of that part of the digital economy.

Thank you for your consideration of this BUILD Grant request. If you have any questions, please contact Jack Swanner at (828)421-8444 or by email at jjswanner57@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Jack Swanner, CLA Executive Director